Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 140013
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:EESVENDSEN:HMN
APPROVED BY AF/W:TWMSMITH
AF/I:SMERCURIO
S/PHWARD
D/HA:KHILL
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
AF ONLY
----------162241Z 101056 /61
P 162000Z JUN 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 140013

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, LI

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: COUNTRY ACTION PLAN FOR LIBERIA

REF: STATE 139160
1. THE GEOGRAPHIC BUREAUS HAVE BEEN TASKED TO PREPARE HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION REPORTS INCLUDING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EACH COUNTRY AND THE PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THOSE CONDITIONS.

2. THIS CABLE TRANSMITS THE DESK'S DRAFT REPORT FOR YOUR COMMENTS. YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IS REQUESTED BY JUNE 27 SO THAT THE BUREAU CAN MEET THE SUBMISSION DATE OF JULY 1. SLUG CABLE FOR AF DISTRIBUTION ONLY.

3. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE COUNTRY EVALUATION
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 140013

WILL BE CLASSIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. REPORTS WILL BE USED AS SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE PREPARATION OF ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON ALL COUNTRIES WHICH ARE RECIPIENTS OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE, AND WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATING COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

BEGIN TEXT.

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN LIBERIA

1. LIBERIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WITH RESPECT TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON IS GENERALLY QUITE COMMENDABLE. THE DEPARTMENT IS UNAWARE OF ANY RECENT INSTANCES OF ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT. ACCESS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM IS AVAILABLE TO ALL, AND DURING THE PAST 20 YEARS CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT HAS BEEN MADE IN THE RIGHTS OF THE NON-URBAN, TRIBAL-BASED MAJORITY. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY ALLEGED INSTANCES OF INVASION OF THE HOME. TORTURE IS NEITHER SANCTIONED NOR PRACTICED.

CHARGES OF CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN ABSENT FROM THE PUBLIC SCENE FOR MANY YEARS, BUT IN JANUARY LIBERIA REINSTITUTED PUBLIC FLOGGING OF CONVICTED THIEVES AS A DETERRENT MEASURE. HOWEVER, ADVERSE PUBLICITY SEEMS TO HAVE DAMPENED THE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE'S INTEREST IN FURTHERING SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS.

2. LIBERIA'S RECORD WITH RESPECT TO CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES IS QUITE GOOD, PARTICULARLY IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, RELIGION, AND ASSEMBLY, ARE CONSTITUTIONALLY GUARANTEED. THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING TRAVEL ABROAD ARE MINIMAL. LIBERIA'S EMIGRATION POLICIES ARE FREE AND LIBERAL. THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IS OPEN TO ALL WHO MEET THE AGE AND CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

AND POLITICS IN LIBERIA CAN BE VERY LIVELY.

3. THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO EXTENDING ASSISTANCE TO THE COUNTRY'S POOR. UNDER SUCH SLOGANS AS "FROM MATS TO MATTRESSES" THE PRESIDENT HAS OFTEN STATED HIS FIRM COMMITMENT TO A GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF HIS PEOPLE. HE HAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY ADOPTED THE NEW DIRECTIONS CONCEPT IN US AID WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON ASSISTANCE TO THE RURAL POOR. IN THE PAST 5-6 YEARS LIBERIA'S BUDGET HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY STRUCTURED TOWARD THIS END.

WHILE CORRUPTION EXISTS, IT IS NEITHER EXPLICITLY NOR IMPLICITLY CONDONED BY PRESIDENT TOLBERT AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES. RETRIBUTION IS OFTEN QUITE SWIFT ONCE THE OFFENDING GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS DISCOVERED.

4. LIBERIA'S POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS DUE IN NO SMALL PART TO THE PERSONAL CONVICTIONS OF PRESIDENT TOLBERT

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

AND THE TOP LEADERSHIP. ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS UPON ASSUMING OFFICE WAS TO DISMANTLE A SECURITY SYSTEM BUILT UP BY HIS PREDECESSOR WHICH WAS NOTORIOUS FOR ITS

CORRUPTION AND ABUSES. HE HAS GIVEN AUTHORITY AND SUPPORT TO A NATIONAL COMMISSION TO ERADICATE CORRUPTION IN NATIONAL LIFE. HIS EXAMPLE, WHILE STILL GREETED IN SOME PARTS BY CYNICISM, HAS HAD A CUMULATIVE POSITIVE AFFECT UPON ATTITUDES IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.

5. AS CAN BE EXPECTED, THE LIBERIANS WOULD BE QUITE SENSITIVE TO ANY OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER, WITH SOME JUSTIFICAITON, TO BE AN EXEMPLARY HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. THEY WOULD TEND TO ATTRIBUTE ANY CRITICISM TO BIAS AND AN UNFAMILIARITY WITH CURRENT CONDITIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. LIBERIA IS GENERALLY CRITICIZED ON TWO ACCOUNTS: FOR ITS RESTRICTIVE CITIZENSHIP POLICIES AND FOR BEING A ONE-PARTY STATE. IT HAS A UNIQUE HISTORY AS A HAVEN FOR BLACK FREEDMEN FROM NORTH AMERICA, PARTICULARLY THE US, AND ITS CONSTITUTION LIMITS CITIZENSHIP TO "PERSONS OF NEGRO DESCENT." LIBERIA WAS CONCEIVED AND ESTABLISHED PARTLY BECAUSE OF INHOSPITABLE CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES. THE LIBERIANS WOULD BE QUICK TO POINT TO THE IRONY OF OUR TAKING ANY STEPS TO ELIMINATE ANY ALLEGED RACISM.

LIBERIA HAS BEEN RULED BY TRUE WHIG PARTY LEADERS FOR OVER 100 YEARS, AND THERE ARE NO OTHER NATIONAL PARTIES AT PRESENT. OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE NEITHER PROSCRIBED NOR SUPPRESSED, HOWEVER, AND MANY HAVE EXISTED IN THE PAST. IN THIS RESPECT DEMOCRACY IN LIBERIA RESEMBLES THAT IN THE US SOUTH ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO. WHILE THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION WAS OFTEN HOTLY CONTESTED AMONG MANY CANDIDATES, THE FORMAL ELECTION AGAINST A NOMINAL REPUBLICAN OPPONENT WAS USUALLY A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

THE PUBLIC FLOGGINGS NOTED EARLIER ARE REPELLENT TO MANY LIBERIANS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS DEFENDED THIS PRACTICE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS CONSISTENT WITH TRADITIONAL AFRICAN PRACTICES, WHETHER OR NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE WEST. ONLY THROUGH QUIET DIPLOMACY BY POINTING TO THE CRUEL NATURE OF SUCH PUNISHMENTS MIGHT THE USG BE ABLE TO HELP CURB THIS PRACTICE.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

2. LIBERIA HAS SIGNALLED ITS APPROVAL OF THE US HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE THROUGH STATEMENTS MADE BOTH BY THE PRESIDENT AND BY FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS. LEADERS OF OTHER GROUPS IN THE COUNTRY HAVE ALSO RESPONDED FAVORABLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3. AS STATED ABOVE, THE LIBERIANS ARE RATHER PROUD OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. THEY SEE THE US INITIATIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS NOT DIRECTED AT THEIR COUNTRY.

4. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST LIBERIA ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES MUST BE DONE QUIETLY AND WITH A MINIMUM OF ARM-TWISTING. THE US HAS A LARGE NUMBER OF INTERESTS IN LIBERIA DISPROPORTIONATE TO ITS SIZE AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE, AND A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN WOULD ALMOST ASSUREDLY FORCE AN ADVERSE REACTION.

THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT HAS STATED ITS WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THE USG IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE UN. IT WOULD APPRECIATE AN EFFORT ON OUR PART TO CONSULT WITH THEM BEFORE PROCEEDING IN A MULTILATERAL CONTEXT IN WHICH IT FEELS THESE ISSUES CAN BEST BE DEALT. CHRISTOPHER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE140013
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EESVENDSEN:HMN
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770215-0974
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770649/aaaabqpy.tel
Line Count: 199
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b8bb7c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 77 STATE 139160
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2121860
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS: COUNTRY ACTION PLAN FOR LIBERIA
TAGS: SHUM, LI
To: MONROVIA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b8bb7c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009